

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

By this amendment, claims 10 and 12 were amended. Support can be found from paragraphs [0021] and [0026] of the specification and in the cancelled claims. No new matter is introduced. Claims 1-9, 11, 14 and 15 are cancelled without prejudice. The specification was amended to correct minor typographical and grammatical errors. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested for currently pending claims 10, 12 and 13.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103. The Office Action rejected claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13, and 14 under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,006,764 to Chu et al. in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication 1001/0038976 to Tanabe et al. The Office Action further rejected claims 9, 12, and 15 under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chu in view of Tanabe et al. and further in view of “applicant’s admitted prior art” (APA).

Regarding Claim 10, neither Chu et al. nor Tanabe et al. disclose or suggest the step of “using a stripping agent to remove said photoresist on said first portion and simultaneously form a water-insoluble passivation layer by reacting said stripping agent with an etching by-product on a third portion of said etched metal film exposed from said photoresist substantially immediately after etching off said second portion” of said metal film. Chu et al. performs a dry ashing process between the etching process and a step of washing out the resist surface layers (this step cited by the examiner as equivalent to the step of using a stripping agent to remove the photoresist recited in claim 1 of the present application) by an amine based solvent (col. 1, lines 53-55; col. 2, lines 13-19). Chu does not form a water-insoluble passivation layer made by reacting the stripping agent with the etching by-product, formed immediately after the etching process.

Besides, Chu performs the further steps of depositing and etching a passivation layer comprising silicon oxide over the metal layer immediately after the metal-etching process (col. 4 lines 40-48). These intermediate steps will defer the formation of the passivation layer made from stripping agent with etching by-product as recited in claim 1 of the present application. Tanabe et al. treat the silicon wafer by immersing it successively in a remover solution following an after-corrosion treatment and an ashing process, instead of the etching process (paragraph [0023]). Therefore, Tanabe does not disclose or suggest forming a water-insoluble passivation

layer immediately after the etching process. It wastes time to perform the Chu's dry ashing process and Tanabe's after-corrosion treatment and ashing process between the metal-etching step and photoresist-removing step. Compared to the cited references, the cycle time of the overall claimed process is reduced, but does not lead to worse corrosion problem according to the present invention. Hence, Chu's washing step and Tanabe's immersing step should not be viewed as equivalent to the steps of removing the photoresist and simultaneously forming the water-insoluble passivation layer of the present invention.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the pending claims 10, 12, and 13 would not have been obvious from the combined teachings of Chu, Tanabe et al., and APA. Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. If there are any remaining issues preventing allowance of the pending claims that may be clarified by telephone, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned.

Transmittal of Priority Document. Enclosed is a certified copy of the priority document, Taiwan 091116187, filed July 19, 2002.

Respectfully submitted,



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